

LITURGICAL LIVING

Series 27: February 25– March 02

Fasting: A Call to True Self-Denial

We're now a little over two weeks into Lent. How is it going for you? Last week we touched on the first pillar of Lent, prayer, by focusing on the Stations of the Cross. And how Jesus' suffering on the Cross can help us make sense of our suffering. How the Cross can show us what true love is. This week, we will focus on Fasting. What it is and what it really means to deny oneself.

Fasting is a penitential practice where we deny ourselves something. Whether that is food or drink, or something else pleasurable to us. Fasting is a powerful gift that can bring us closer to God. These acts of self-denial help us to turn away from selfishness, free ourselves from worldly distractions, to join ourselves in Jesus' suffering and to help us recognize that God alone will ultimately satisfy our needs. During Lent we come face-to-face with the reality that we cannot fully provide for ourselves and that the world will not satisfy our deepest desires.



Just as we see with Jesus in the desert, we acknowledge that we do not “live by bread alone, / but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). In the face of temptation, Jesus found strength and virtue by trusting in God, the Father, and his design. Following his example, we take on the disciplines of Lent (praying, fasting and almsgiving) to aid us in going to the Father in the places where we suffer a weakness of will or temptation to sin.

St. Augustine famously prayed, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You” (“Confessions”). By giving up something during Lent we face our inner restlessness by removing the things or actions we often use to cover up our neediness and give us comfort. We acknowledge that only God will ultimately satisfy us in both body and soul, and at least for 40 days we can place our hope in God alone, trusting that our wants and dreams will be fulfilled in heaven by the providence of God.

That sounds great! But all too often we can find ourselves needing a perspective shift about fasting and self-denial; at least I do. Oftentimes our Lenten practices can come from a place of feeling the need to fix something about ourselves. Or we find ourselves saying, “I don't like that I do this so I need to change.” The negative creeps in, tying ourselves to shame and lies. We make difficult Lenten practices and face them with self-reliance and pride. When we do this we can find ourselves facing Lent with dread. and when it's over, look what I did, look how I kicked this habit or whatever it may be.

But my friends, Lent is actually so much more than just self-denial and gloom. It's a “yes” to God's love by saying “no” to something that might be distracting us. It invites us to better recognize God's kindness, which leads us to repentance. With this understanding we can more easily lean into God's mercy, leading us to change. We tap into the same power that rose Jesus from the dead on Easter. We can enter into Lent with excitement to where God is transforming us!

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The Church sets this example clearly through the prayers we hear at Mass. They are rooted in this hope that something wonderful can happen in this season. That all of the faithful can have a conversion of heart and be transformed to the sons and daughters that God wants us to be.

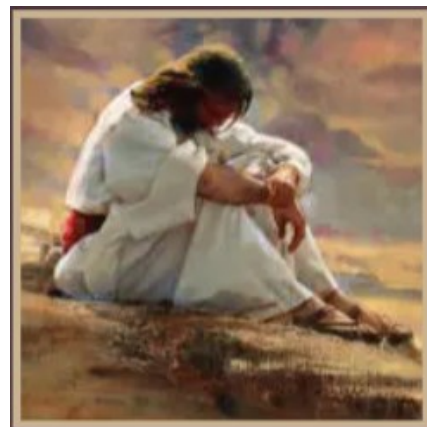
The Holy Spirit will guide us during this time. Often to surprising places. As we saw in the Gospel of Mark during the first week of Lent, the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert. What is so amazing is that He didn't go there alone. Angels ministered to him and He relied on the power of God. The same can happen to us if we open ourselves up. God will care for us and lead us.

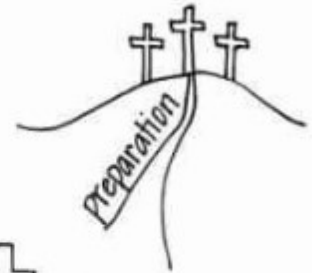
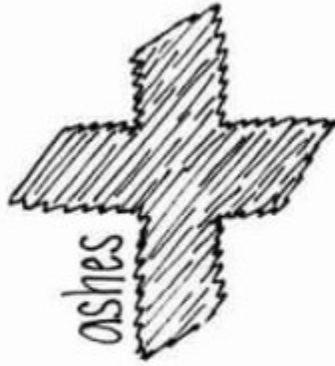
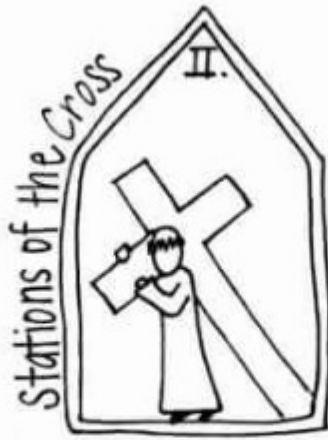
As you fast this Lent you might feel hungry, thirsty, uncomfortable, or in need. Seize these moments as opportunities to know how your body and soul hunger and thirst for God and need God above all other things. God is looking to fulfill your desires. Ask Him how he wants to fill your desires this year. Either you can look to fill yourself up on lesser things or you can allow God to fill you up with his magnificence and grace.

A few Resources to check out this Lent:

- [Formed.com](https://www.formed.com) has an entire section devoted to Lent.
 - Brother Francis– The Stations of the Cross has been amazing for us to introduce praying the Stations of the Cross with our children.
- [Word on Fire Ministries](https://www.wordonfire.com)
 - Bishop Barron's scriptural rosary helped me to learn about and increase my devotion to the rosary.
- Consider a [podcast](#): There are so many good ones!
 - *Abiding Together* is a personal favorite and inspired this topic today!

See AFC Website
for
Digital Version





Lent



40

forty days

